

Blackside Dace

Phoxinus cumberlandensis

Description - The blackside dace is found in the 30 separate streams in the upper Cumberland River system. In Virginia, the black-side dace is known to occur only in Lee County in the Cox Creek, a tributary to the North Fork Powell River. The only other locations for this fish is in Kentucky and Tennessee. This fish reaches a length of up to 3 inches and has a life span of three years. In both sexes, the coloring is bright. The back is green/gold with black specks, the belly can be pale or brilliant scarlet, the fins are bright yellow with metallic silver surrounding the base of the pelvic and pectoral fins. There is also a single black stripe lateral line.

Life History - The blackside dace are found in small upland streams with moderate flow and associated with undercut banks and large rocks. The spawning season is April through June. During courtship, the adult male makes nest sites with a tunnel which allows the female to

enter the spawning area. The male participates in the fertilization of the egg. Their diet is algae, detritus, and insects.

Conservation - The blackside dace was federally listed as threatened species on June 12, 1987. The presence of the southern redbelly dace (*Phoxinus erythrogaster*) could be the reason for the blackside dace decline. This southern redbelly dace has been seen in many places where the blackside dace once occupied. Due to the blackside dace short life span, any habitat disturbances significantly impact this fish. The most significant factor in the decline on this species is habitat degradation from siltation. Other threats to this species are logging, development, natural low flows, impoundments, water withdrawals, pollution, agricultural runoff, chemical spills and water quality degradation from poor land use practices.

What You Can Do To Help - If you own property that borders a stream or other waterway, avoid using chemicals or fertilizers. To help control erosion and reduce runoff, maintain a buffer of natural vegetation along the stream bank. Install fencing to prevent livestock from entering the stream, this will reduce siltation and input of waste products.

For more information on the blackside dace contact:

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References

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
1987. Determination of endangered status for the blackside dace.
Federal Register 52(113): 22580-22585.



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